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these massy rings of gold are preserved in the north; some of them having smaller rings hanging on them. Those were used as money," &c. (Lindsay).

The fourth specimen in the engraving, the Neligan ring, is interesting as being the only one of silver, hitherto found, resembling those of gold and bronze, with the cupped expansions. This weighs only 6 dwts. 18 grs. It was obtained from Limerick. The fifth ring, also, belonged to the same gentleman. Its weight I omitted to take; but it is interesting as forming a connecting link between the last and Mr. Wyse's ring, by reason of its bulbed extremities.

The Brahalish gold ring, of which a separate engraving is given, possesses considerable interest. The chevron carving upon it is recognised as a peculiarity in Celtic ornamentation. Comparing its size with its weight, 3 oz. 5 dwts. 12 grs., it is evident that it is not solid. It was found in the winter of 1842, at Brahalish, near Bantry, on the site of an erased *lios*, and purchased by the late Redmond Anthony, of Piltown. After his decease it was sold with his other collections in London, and would thus be lost to Irish archæology if I had not preserved a drawing of it.

In the gold rings the metal is generally very pure, although one came into the possession of Mr. Sainthill, in which there was so much of alloy that it formed a species of electrum, a compound of nearly four parts of gold to one of silver. It is, indeed, much to be feared that amongst the rude forefathers of ancient Ireland there existed knaves who deemed it no grievous wrong to cheat their confiding neighbours, by passing base rings upon them, just as in modern times, fraudulent money is put into circulation. Specimens have turned up, gold without and earth within. Even so it was in bronze: a ring in my possession exhibits a similar fraud; the hollow within having been filled with a fine sand.

FOLK-LORE.

No. I.

THE FENIAN TRADITIONS OF SLIABH-NA-M-BAN.

BY MR. JOHN DUNNE.

[*Read at the Meeting of July 9th.*]

OUR distinguished countryman, Dr. Wilde, in one of his interesting chapters on Irish popular superstitions, recently given to the public, mourns over the loss of our old fairy-lore which is certain to result from the removal of so large a portion of the population through famine, pestilence, and emigration, the natural consequences of the potato-blight. There are few, doubtless, who would refuse to sym-

pathise in the learned gentleman's regretful feelings on this subject, or to acknowledge that his anticipations are but too likely to be well founded. But it appears to me that the curious old fairy legends of our country, much as their loss should be deplored, were never half as valuable or as interesting as the traditions which have long lingered amongst our peasantry concerning the primæval inhabitants of Ireland, the total obliteration of which is now, unfortunately, threatened from the same causes. The pre-historic annals of this kingdom, which remain yet to be properly compiled, must be drawn not alone from the appearance of the existing primæval monuments, but from the vivid traditions connected with them, long handed down from sire to son in the localities in which they are placed, and which, though many of their features were marvellous, incongruous, or impossible of occurrence, are far from being worthless as aids to a proper investigation of that important subject. With such materials much may yet be done towards the elucidation of remote events in our national history: and though a very large proportion must, unquestionably, be thrown aside as profitless chaff, from amongst it many valuable grains of corn may be sifted. The elf-lore, which was once a characteristic of our country, will, doubtless, be lost or forgotten from the circumstances to which Dr. Wilde has alluded; but Irish elf-lore has had many cordial chroniclers, and Crofton Croker's gleanings, and the researches of several other eminent writers, will preserve the memory of our most remarkable fairy legends so long as English literature endures. Not so, however, our Fenian traditions—few have thought it worth their while to inquire after and preserve a single incident, however romantic, nationally characteristic, or locally interesting; and, with the succession of disastrous years through which this land has now passed, it must be obvious that much of this lore which was unwritten has been obliterated: indeed, unless some strenuous effort be now made to collect the Fenian tales remaining in the memory of our people, with the present generation such of them as are not already preserved amongst the ancient manuscript Ossianic poems will certainly pass away. Under this impression, it is now my wish to place on record in the Transactions of the Kilkenny Archæological Society such of the traditions of Sliabh-na-m-ban as I have heard related or can still collect in the district. Unfortunately, my researches cannot be now made with such facility as in by-gone days—and those not remote either—when the farmer and his group of labourers, from all parts of the country, sat down in the evening, their day of toil being over, with light hearts before a blazing turf fire and a *sciach* of smiling potatoes, and recounted in turn the tales of the olden time handed down to them from their fathers. Now, alas! the story-telling peasant is in his grave, the poor-house, or the wilds of America; and the farmer lies down at night with a heavy heart, brooding over his insurmountable difficulties and misfortunes. Nevertheless, I hope to rescue from oblivion some old-world stories of my native district, which may prove not unacceptable to the Society.

As Sliabh-na-m-ban mountain, commonly termed by the Irish-speaking people Sliabh-na-m-ban-fionn, is the most prominent object in the locality, and the site of many of the most famous exploits of the traditionary hero, Fionn Mac Cumhail, I believe I cannot begin more suitably than by noticing a legend referring to the origin of its name. The story of the pedestrian race up the heathy acclivity of a portion of the mountain by the fairest ladies of Ireland, Fionn's hand in wedlock being the prize of the winner, was one of the most frequently told in the locality from my infancy upwards. Some of the deepest read of our *seannchaidhes* seem inclined to despise the legend, as it has never been found amongst the ancient written metrical romances, but as my task is to glean the existing oral traditions of a locality, I see no reason why I should treat this, the most popular amongst them, with contemptuous silence. The story has been briefly, and rather incorrectly printed by Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall, in a note to their "Ireland, its Scenery, Character, &c.," and alluded to by other writers for aught I know; but I wish to state it correctly here. Fionn, as the tale goes, like many a modern "gallant gay," had from time to time paid his addresses to several of the fairest belles of his day, on all of whose hearts he had made a strong impression, but without actually committing himself to any by asking the important question which decides such delicate affairs. Each fair lady fondly flattered herself that she would be the chosen bride of the great chieftain, but each of course cordially hated her numberless rivals, and the result was a general quarrel amongst them, carried on with such implacable acrimony as threatened to throw the whole country into a hopeless embroilment. Fionn saw that with him alone rested the power of putting an end to this very unpleasant controversy, but as it was possible that he could only please one of his admirers by taking her hand, and he was sure to make relentless enemies of all the rest—a consummation which he by no means devoutly wished—he found himself placed in a very unpleasant position, to relieve himself from which it was necessary that some stratagem should be resorted to without delay. Accordingly, he made a public declaration of equal affection and admiration of all the numerous candidates for his hand, but announced that, as he could not marry them all, he would leave the decision of the important question to the agility of their own pretty feet. Sliabh-na-m-ban was chosen as the site of the memorable race, and the chieftain himself stood at the top of the hill to receive and proclaim the successful competitor. Amongst the bevy of beauties, however, there was one whose charms had made a deeper impression upon the hero's heart than all the rest, and to her he did not scruple to whisper in private a word of advice, by adopting which she might be certain to gain the much coveted prize. This lady was Graine, or Grace, the beauteous daughter of Cormac Ulfhada, monarch of Ireland; and the counsel which her lover gave her was simply this, that she should not attempt to run too fast in the outset, so as to exhaust her breath. The advice was strictly followed. Graine for some

moments appeared to have been left far behind all the other runners, who put forth their utmost strength at once to breast the acclivity. The exertion, however, was too much for them; soon they became heated, lost breath, and finally sank down one after another, completely exhausted, on the heath; and had the mortification to see the princess, who had at first seemed to make but little way, pass by them fresh and unruffled, and smiling triumphantly in full consciousness of possessing the secret of success. Several made a last effort again to outstrip her, but in vain; for she alone gained the summit and won the much coveted prize. The princess had now gained as firm possession of the chieftain's hand, as formerly she had won his heart, and a long life of conjugal bliss was fondly anticipated for the distinguished pair. But the lady proved as frail and false as her lord was chivalrous and confiding, and after the expiration of a few short months she eloped with the most cherished friend of her husband, Diarmuid O'Duibhne.

Many of the peasantry in recounting this legend will insist that the princess possessed no personal attraction, but quite the reverse, and that therefore the preference bestowed upon her by Fionn can only be accounted for on the supposition that she had recourse to magic arts to gain that end. These people, however, confound the name of Graine, which signifies Grace, with *grana*, which means ugly, and from this false conclusion draw the inference of the lady's want of beauty.*

* However this may be, the belief is general amongst a large proportion of the peasantry, that Graine was by no means the beautiful personage which others represent her, and that Fionn was anything but pleased at her success in the race. The following is the version of the tradition current in the barony of Iverk, as supplied to us by Mr. James Fogarty:—

“The name of *Sliabh-na-m-ban* is said to have been derived from the following traditionary circumstance. From amongst the numerous princesses and beautiful young women to whom Fionn Mac Cumhail had paid attentions in Ireland and foreign nations, he selected twenty-one, either for their superior personal attractions, or the influence of their family connexion, from which to choose his wife, and they were thus to compete for his hand:—On an appointed day the twenty-one young women were to stand in a row at the foot of *Sliabh-na-m-ban*, and upon a given signal to run up the mountain, the first who should arrive at *Mullach-suidhe-Finn*, to become the wife of the king of the Fenians. There was not among the candidates a less comely woman than Grana, nor one less concerned for the success of the race, as she considered it impossible she could be the winner, in consequence of the fame which several of the beautiful competitors had acquired for speed, it being commonly reported that some of them could run before the wind and leave it far behind them! They all stood in anxious expectation awaiting the signal, except Grana, who took her place in hopeless indifference. Fionn stood at the table or *bord*, at the summit of the mountain, and having blown a loud blast upon his trumpet, the racers set off at full speed; Grana, however, walked carelessly and slowly after them. Shortly the first in the race dropped down on the path, fainting from over-exertion; the next young woman passed her for a short distance, and then fell exhausted also. In this manner, to the number of twenty, they fell one after another before they had come within sight of Fionn. Grana then easily passed them, several trying to rise and move again, but dying in their struggles. At last Grana passed them all, and arrived at

But if she was not ugly in person, she was, at least, false in heart and mind, verifying by her conduct the truth of the proverb—"beauty and virtue are not always found together." Nevertheless, before condemning the lady altogether, she ought to be allowed the benefit of a very important extenuating circumstance. It appears from universal tradition that Diarmuid, who was called from his swiftness "*an coraire b'feairt do b' an an b-Feirne*" (the swiftest footman amongst the Fenians), from his gallantry, "*Diarmuid na m-ban*" (Diarmuid of the women), and from his personal beauty, "*Diarmuid deo-zeal breac-rolair O'Duibhne*" (the white-toothed bright-skinned Diarmuid O'Duibhne), was endowed with a supernatural attribute. He possessed on his breast a *ball-earc*, i.e., a "beauty spot," which contained so great a charm that no woman could look upon it without loving him and being compelled to accompany him whithersoever he wished to go. Thus the peasantry admit, that Graine having chanced to see the *ball-earc* on Diarmuid's breast, needs must follow him, even "through fire and water." This Diarmuid is not only connected with the *Sliabh-na-m-ban* district through the circumstance of his elopement with Graine, but by many additional traditions which refer to his military and other achievements in the locality, and even his sepulchre was, till its recent destruction, pointed out in the adjoining barony of Knocktopher.*

Bord-suidhe-Finn, where she was acknowledged as the queen of Fionn. The chieftain, however, was far from being pleased at this result, and immediately expressed his disappointment by these bitter words—"*Nan a b'e do beata cuimha a Grana gan r'eim*" (never may be your welcome to me, Grana, without beauty or attractions). Grana was the mother of Ossian, but Fionn is said never to have loved either the mother or son, and in revenge for his infidelity, she eloped with Diarmuid O'Duibhne."—Eps.

* See paper on "Giants' Graves" in the Transactions for 1849, p. 14, where the tradition is given respecting the death of Diarmuid. The following additional particulars, supplying the adventures of Graine after the demise of her lover, are contained in a report to the Society, by Mr. James Fogarty, on the legendary lore of Iverk:—

"When Grana eloped with Diarmuid O'Duibhne, in consequence of the indifference which Fionn manifested towards her, they retired into a great forest and built a wooden house in a wild place, where they could not be discovered, and which was called *leaba Grana* (Grana's bed). Although Fionn by no means sorrowed at the loss of his spouse, still his pride was greatly hurt, and he resolved to compass the destruction of his wife's paramour, which he contrived in the following manner. He ordered a mock hunt to be prepared of a boar having poisoned tusks. The Fenians, with their hounds went in full cry through the woods, and Diarmuid hearing the clangour of the chase near his habitation, could not restrain himself from joining in the sport, although Grana warned him of the danger upon which he was running, in the following lines:—

*Cir leir na gabair a Dhiarmuid,
Zur na fiedair an fiadac breise;
Ma cuimh tu t'fod le Mac Cumail,
Ir roza leir tu beir gan ceile.*

However, with respect to the derivation of *Sliabh-na-m-ban*, from which the loves of Graine and Diarmuid have caused me to wander; it is averred by tradition that the name of the mountain is derived

Listen to the hounds, oh ! Diarmuid,
And do not answer the false hunt.
If you place confidence in the son of Cumhail
It will be his choice to leave you without a loving companion.

Diarmuid joined the hunt; the boar was soon slain, and the Fenians drew round, admiring its enormous tusks. Fionn took out a line to measure them, and seeing Diarmuid, ordered him, as if nothing had occurred, to hold the line at the portion of the tusk in which the venom was contained; Diarmuid tried to evade the order, foreseeing the danger, but he was compelled to comply, and to press his hand upon the poisoned tusk, when he remarked, that he knew his death would be the result, and that the consequence would be, that there would be an end to the race and fame of the Fenians within the space of one hundred years. He died from the *ἑλασπὶς ἡμῆς* (poison-tooth), and his prophecy was accordingly fulfilled. Grana, thus left to her own resources, was about to become a mother, and before giving birth to a son, of which Diarmuid was the father, her difficulties were increased, in consequence of her house in the woods being consumed by fire. She sought a secure place in which to live and conceal the birth of her child, and fixed on a great hollow tree for the purpose. The hollow was not, however, sufficiently large, but she prevailed on a woodman to increase the cavity, so as to make a sufficient apartment to hold her bed. When this was done, she bid the man lie down in it, in order that she might see if it was sufficiently long, when taking up his axe she cut his head off, to prevent the secret of her retreat being conveyed to Fionn. She then lived in this hollow, without any human being knowing where she was, feeding her son with all kinds of fruit and game which the wood afforded. A wolf was in the habit of coming and helping itself from their larder in Grana's absence, and she at length told the child that she could support him no longer if he did not help to provide food for himself, or at least catch the thief. The next time the wolf paid a visit there, the child seized the animal by the neck, and held it in a half strangled state till his mother returned. She then considered him sufficiently hardy to be brought out into the world, and therefore took him with her on all her subsequent excursions, carrying him on her back when he became wearied, and instructing him in every thing requisite for a hero of illustrious descent. At last, when he was fifteen years old, she resolved to take him to the palace of Fionn to see some great games which were to be there celebrated, and for the purpose she disguised herself so as not to be recognised by her former lord or his attendants. The youth entered into competition with the oldest warriors, and bore off the palm in every trial of strength or skill. However, Grana saw reason to fear that they were discovered, and her son and she departed privately, endeavouring to make their way home unobserved. Shortly they heard the Fenian guards in pursuit, and Grana was sinking from fatigue. Her son reminded her how she used to carry him on her back in his infancy, and asked permission now to carry her. She consented, and placing her across his shoulders, and holding her by the legs, he fled with matchless speed through wood and brake, till he arrived at their residence in the hollow tree, where he was about to set his mother down, imagining that he had brought her home safely; but to his horror he found that her body had been gradually torn away by the branches of the trees, as they passed, to which the flesh was still adhering, and nothing was left of his mother save her legs which he had held !"

Whether the subsequent adventures of the son of Diarmuid and Graine are preserved in tradition or recorded in chronicles we are unaware.—Eds.

from the circumstance of the race of the ladies up its side, and the vast numbers of the fair sex which assembled on the occasion to witness that event, Sliabh-na-m-ban literally meaning "the mountain of women." Mrs. Hall observes, "Slieve-na-man is called in Irish 'Sliabh na mban fionn na heirin,' i.e., 'the mountain of the fair women of Ireland,' for which appellation tradition assigns the whimsical origin," which is above stated. The word *fionn*, as an adjective, certainly means fair, white, or pale, and is usually applied by the peasantry to whitish hair, which they call *gruaig fhionn*. The people of the locality, however, Mrs. Hall's testimony notwithstanding, will have it that the word here does not allude to the ladies at all, but to the general of the Fenian heroes himself, and that Sliabh-na-m-ban-fionn should be translated "the mountain of Fionn's women." There is a serious grammatical difficulty in this reading, as Fionn in the genitive case would be Finn, nevertheless the late Mr. Michael Mullally, of Cappaghmore, father of the Rev. William Mullally, P.P. of Donohill, who was an excellent Irish scholar, espoused the popular view of the matter, in a letter which I received from him some years since; and as he justly was deemed the best authority on such matters, in the ancient barony of Compsey, I would not presume to contravene his statement, were it not that one of the first living Irish scholars, Dr. O'Donovan, I find, has intimated by a letter* to the Secretaries of this Society, that all the theories hitherto indulged in with respect to the name of the mountain, are incorrect, and that the word *fionn* is a corruption of *Feimheann*, the original appellation of the district to which Sliabh-na-m-ban is adjacent, and the true translation of its name is "The mountain of the women of Feimheann."

* As Dr. O'Donovan's remarks upon the meaning and derivation of Sliabh-na-m-ban-fionn cannot fail to prove interesting to the members of the Society, we consider it well to give them here:—

"Fionn Mac Cumhail's name has nothing to do with that of the mountain. If *fionn*, the last portion of the compound, meant 'of Fionn,' then it should be in the genitive form, *Finn*. The natives of the Counties of Kilkenny, Tipperary, Waterford, and Limerick, all call the mountain Sliabh-na-m-ban-fionn, i.e., 'mountain of the fair [haired] women'—but they never call it Sliabh-na-m-ban-Finn. This is a *fact*, and so far the *living* language is a witness that the mountain was not called after Fionn Mac Cumhail, or any other man. But when the people interpret Sliabh-na-m-ban-fionn as meaning 'mountain of Fionn's women,' they are *wrong*, because the words could not bear that interpretation. Again, Sliabh-na-m-ban-Finn (i.e., of Fionn) would be bad Irish, because the following rule is always adhered to in the modern Irish—'When two substantives come together, one governing the other in the genitive case, the article cannot be used before the governing noun.' It is fair to give the name by which the people call the mountain, but it would be wrong to translate it incorrectly. 'The mountain of Fionn's women' would be *Sliabh-bān-Fhinn*, pronounced *Slie-bān-ēen*; no other form would express it. Sliabh-na-m-ban-fionn is pronounced *Slie-na-mōn-feunn*, and this form could not mean 'mountain of Fionn's women,' but *mons τῶν feminarum candidarum*. This is very clear to every grammatical Irish scholar.

"The Book of Lismore, as well as other ancient Irish manuscripts, con-

Before quitting the subject of the derivation of Sliabh-na-m-ban, however, it may be well to notice another error on the subject into which a writer on Irish antiquities, once looked up to as an authority, has fallen. General Vallancey, speaking of the Scythian religion, observes, that the ceremonies pertaining to their worship were comprehended in the word *Haman* or *Mann*. From this word *Mann*, he says, many of our mountains receive their names—"Take an old Irish fable still in every one's mouth of Sliabh-na-Mann mountain. They say it was first inhabited by foreigners, who came from very distant countries; that they were of both sexes, and taught the Irish the art of *O Shiris*, or *Ouris*, that is, the management of flax and hemp, of cattle, and of tillage. They all wore horns according to their dignity; the chief had five horns. The word *Ouris* now means a meeting of girls at one house, or barn, to card a quantity of wool, or to spin a quantity of flax, and sometimes there are a hundred together. Wherever there is an *Ouris*, the *Mann* come invisible and assist."—*Collectanea de Rebus Hibernicis*, vol. iv. pref. p. viii., note. Now, the very name of the mountain in question, proves this derivation to be erroneous, for it is never pronounced Sliabh-na-man in Irish, but always Sliabh-na-mon, the article *na* properly referring to *m-ban*, the genitive plural of *bean*—woman. *Ouris*, properly spelt *abhras*, literally means yarn of any kind, and by it is also understood the custom treated of in the above passage, which has been copied by Lady Morgan into her "Wild Irish Girl." Her ladyship tells us, that "General Vallancey ingeniously traces those conventions of female industry called *Ouris*, to a Scythian origin, but it is not likely that the Scoto-Milesians, who in their various migrations proceeded from Scythia to Ireland, had any occasion to be instructed in the management of flax, by the 'foreigners' who, according to the legend, 'had first inhabited the Sliabh-na-Mann mountain.'" I must say, I fully agree with Lady Morgan, and I may further add, that in any story, relating to this mountain, I have never heard of "the *Mann*" or of their coming, either visibly or invisibly,

tains a metrical romance, from which it appears that the Tuatha De Danann women of the *Sidh* of this mountain, who enchanted Fionn and his *Fianna*, gave it its name. The fairy palace of these women, on the east shoulder of the mountain, is there called *Sidh ban Feimheann*, i.e., the *sidh* or fairy palace of the women of *Feimheann*. The mountain itself is called Sliabh-ban-Feimheann, or Sliabh-na-m-ban simply. If the second genitive is used, the article must be rejected. Magh Feimheann, i.e., the plain of Feimheann, was exactly co-extensive with the barony of Iffa and Offa East, and this mountain formed its northern boundary. I do not believe that Sliabh-na-m-ban-fionn or Feimheann, is its primitive name; I have reason to believe that it was originally called Sliabh Bile."

Dr. O'Donovan considers the story of the lady-race (which is not to be met with in any of the ancient Irish MS. romances) a comparatively modern tale, which entirely originated in the mistake as to the meaning of a portion of the name of the mountain. We hope that at a future day we shall be enabled to publish a transcript of the ancient romance of the women of Feimheann, (who, by the way, are evidently the original of Vallancey's *Mann*, recte *m-ban*), from the Book of Lismore.—EDS.

to assist the Irish girls at their spinning matches. There is, however, a curious tradition told of certain supernatural spinners connected with Sliabh-na-m-ban, which may have supplied the ground-work upon which fanciful antiquaries have built some of their whimsical theories as to the name of the mountain; and as I have now disposed of Mrs. Hall's "fair women" and General Vallancey's "invisible Mann," I will proceed to narrate the tale, which will serve to illustrate some local popular superstitions, as well as a traditionary statement of the people that one of the lesser eminences of the group, and not the highest of the Sliabh-na-m-ban hills, was the "mountain of the women."

One night, very many years ago, two industrious females were engaged in spinning flax, in a cabin at Gortnapise,* in the vale of Compsey, near the base of Sliabh-na-m-ban mountain. All the rest of the family had been long in bed, but they being intent on finishing some task which they had undertaken, hard work was the order of the night, and all gossip was suspended, except during an occasional intermission, when the bright turf fire was raked out to obtain "a soft spark" to kindle the *dudeen*. It was during one of these sociable intervals, whilst the wind moaned through keyhole and crevice, that the smokers were disturbed by an unusual knocking at the door. Knock succeeded knock with dull and heavy sounds for some minutes, but in vain; the affrighted women made no reply. At length a shrill, hoarse voice asked loudly—"ᐃᑦ ᑲ-ᑦᑦᑦᑦ ᑦᑦ ᐃ ᑦᑦᑦ ᐃ ᑦᑦᑦ ᑦᑦ ᑦᑦᑦ?" (are you within, feet-water)? "ᑦᑦᑦᑦ! ᑦᑦᑦᑦ!" (I am! I am)! was responded immediately from an old pot in the corner of the kitchen in which the family had washed their feet before retiring to rest. "ᐃ ᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦ? ᑦᑦᑦᑦ! ᑦᑦ ᑦᑦ ᐃᑦ ᑦᑦᑦᑦ ᑦᑦ ᑦᑦ ᑦᑦᑦᑦ?" (do you hear? list! what the devil's in the pot?) whispered one of the spinners, in a tremulous tone. "Ó! ᑦᑦ ᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦ—ᑦᑦ ᑦᑦ ᑦᑦᑦᑦ ᐃ ᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦ!" (oh! I don't know, my heart is beating!), was the faint reply. A dabbling noise was next heard from the pot, and some supernatural being in an eel-like form, began to uncoil itself and stretch forward in the direction of the door, which it immediately opened, and in a second several women, strangely attired and of extraordinary aspect, stood before the trembling spinners. Without apology for the intrusion, some of the unbidden visitors began to amuse themselves with the wheels, cards, &c. The women of the house were quite dismayed at this visitation, but endeavoured to dissemble their fears; and one, under pretence of fetching a few sods of turf from a shed in the yard, walked out, but soon returned in a hurry, exclaiming, "ᑦᑦ ᑦᑦᑦᑦ ᑦᑦ ᑦᑦᑦᑦ ᑦᑦᑦᑦ ᑦᑦ ᐃᑦ ᑦᑦᑦᑦ ᑦᑦᑦ ᐃ ᑦᑦᑦᑦ ᑦᑦᑦ ᑦᑦᑦᑦ," (Sliabh-na-m-ban fionn and the

* Gort-na-pise (pronounced Gorth-na-pishe), near Sliabh-na-m-ban. I presume that this is the place called Gortnapissi, where a bloody battle was fought in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, "ten battalions of the English being cut to pieces" by Sir John Desmond at the head of the Irish army. (See Abbe Mac Geoghegan's *History of Ireland, Dublin, 1844*, p. 472).

great mountain over it are on fire). This exclamation had a talismanic effect on the unwelcome visitors, who ran out uttering exclamations of alarm. The two women then lost not a moment in locking the door, and obeying some directions mysteriously conveyed to her who had left the house for the turf, as to the precautions to be taken against fairy influence; they thrust the tongs into one of the staples, laid the broom against the door, threw a spark from the fire into the bathing water; plucked a quill from one of the wings of a speckled hen, took the band from off the spinning-wheel, placed the carded flax, or *abhbras*, under a weight, raked up the fire, and jumped into bed. Scarcely, however, had they got their heads under the coverlet, when the mysterious females returned, and were heard calling out, in Irish as before, "let me in, feet-water." The immediate response from within was, in the same language, "no, I cannot, for there is a spark in me;" then the applications of the fairy women were addressed to the other objects in turn—"let me in, tongs," "let me in, broom," "let me in, speckled hen," "let me in, wheel-band," "let me in, *abhbras*." Each of these answered that it was out of their power, assigning as the reason the precaution taken in the disposition made of them by the owners of the house. The unearthly visitants then raised a yell of disappointment, and departed without their expected victims. This strange legend is always cited in the district as the origin of the very prevalent custom amongst the peasantry there, of throwing a spark of fire into any vessel in which a person's feet have been bathed at night; and to this day the whizzing of a red sod in a pot of hot water is music to the ears of every old woman in Compsey, from the assurance therefrom derived that the house is thus defended from the visitation of the "good people."*

* The practice of putting a spark of fire in feet-water, to protect the premises from the power of the fairies, was till very lately prevalent in the north as well as the south of Ireland, and may, perhaps, be still kept up.

The following version of the above curious story, which strongly resembles some of the mystic tales of Germany, is supplied to us by Mr. James Fogarty, as that received amongst the Irish-speaking portion of the peasantry of Iverk:—

"Some four or five hundred years ago, a rich woman, residing between Portnascully and Polroan, in the barony of Iverk, received a strange visit from a number of mysterious women, who came from Sliabh-na-m-ban. This woman being very industrious, and having a great deal of woollen cloth to manufacture, sat up late at night, and her numerous family used to be in bed long before her. One night, whilst busily engaged cleaning and breaking wool, a voice was heard outside the door calling 'Órзуи! аηδου!αr' (open the door). She asked, 'Cia cá aηη?' (who is there?) The reply was, 'ᄃηre cáηleac̃ ηα η-αηη αδαιηce' (I am the witch, or hag, of the one horn). The mistress thought it was one of the neighbours who was jesting with her, but upon opening the door she beheld an extraordinary looking female, wearing a horn on her forehead, and having cards in her hands, with which she immediately began to card the wool, which was in the house, as fast as the wind. After a time this strange visitor exclaimed to the mistress, who looked on in amazement, 'I r fáda ηom cá ηα ηηηα' (I think the women are very long delaying). Immediately another voice was heard, saying, 'Óρзуи! аηδου!αr аηηr' (open the

served in manuscript, in ancient Irish books, and some of which have been so beautifully translated by the amiable and accomplished Miss Charlotte Brooke, in her "Reliques of Irish Poetry," but amongst the people the passages referring to the most remarkable natural objects in their own locality have been handed down by oral tradition. History states that Ossian survived the battle of Gabhra, and it is probable that he also outlived the few of his Fenian compeers who had escaped that fatal fight, for there is no proverbial saying more common in the mouths of the peasantry than, "Oírin a n-bíad na Féinne"—i.e., "Ossian after the Fenians." Our Irish Homer, as he has been called, doubtless might have lived for some time after the other heroes of his day, but how he and the Irish apostle could have been contemporaries, is a mystery to me. It throws no obstacle, however, in the way of our local *seannchaidhes'* faith, for they have no difficulty in elucidating the matter by the tradition which I here recount, as it often has been repeated in my presence.

The Fenians were one day in pursuit of a stately elk, which, after a long chase, their hounds succeeded in killing; but scarcely had it fallen, when a dense heavy fog enveloped the landscape all round. A sudden gleam of bright sunshine, however, divided the dark fog, unfolding to their astonished gaze, a venerable old man with long beard and silvery hair. Surveying for a few moments, with apparent concern, the "antlered monarch of the woods" expiring in the thicket where it had fallen, he lifted the carcase with much ease and throwing it across his shoulders, walked away as if unincumbered by any burthen. The Fenians, hungry and fatigued after the day's chase, and ashamed and provoked at the idea of losing their quarry so easily and unceremoniously, followed with hasty strides after this mysterious personage, but to their surprise they always found themselves the same distance behind the object of their pursuit, no matter how they might increase their speed. Many an intricate copse and deep entangled glen did they force their way through in the pursuit, till at length they beheld at the further end of a narrow glade, the aged man enter a low moss-covered hut, which, on approaching, they found to be a most delightfully situated retreat. They followed into the house; but it is unnecessary to detail in full the incidents of their interview with the supernatural occupant; suffice it to say, that they received a welcome, were plenteously regaled, and wondered very much at the strange things which they saw, and at the words of

עא אנה רא עאע, אה רא אה עאנה' (it would be hard for me, I am broken, bruised, and mixed in the mouths of every one in the house). Finding it thus impossible to gain an entrance, for the purpose of depriving the inhabitants of life and property (for all were lying dead till the enchanted bread restored them), the witches gave three shrieks, and took their departure for Sliabh-na-m-ban, with this imprecation, 'דוהאפ דוארע אהן ע'רובע מ'ררע' (may your tutor meet his reward)."

Perhaps this strange story may be in some degree founded on the ancient metrical tale of the doings of the Tuatha De Danann women of Sliabh-na-m-ban, already alluded to. —EDS.

wisdom which fell during the evening from their mysterious host, who, at their departure in the morning, offered to bestow on each the gift of his own choice. It was then that Diarmuid obtained the *ball-searc*, that being the request which he made. Each of the others was similarly granted his individual wish, all being somewhat similar; but, last of all, Ossian's turn came to state his choice, and he asked for "*ḡḡḡḡ ḡḡ ḡḡḡḡḡḡ*," i.e., "grace and mercy." The sage congratulated Ossian on the wisdom of his choice and expressed his regret that all the others had not made an equally sensible request. After this he bade them a long farewell. On their way, the Fenians pondered deeply on the strange adventure that they had met with, but time passed on, wearing away these impressions. Fionn fell in an engagement at Rathbrea, on the banks of the Boyne, A.D. 294, or 284, according to the Annals of Tighernach; and his valiant hosts were annihilated some years after at the famous battle of Gabhra; Ossian survived this battle, as before stated, and was subsequently conveyed by some invisible power to *Tir-na-n-og* *—"the land of youth," and the Elysium of the Pagan Irish—whence, after a long lapse of time, and many urgent entreaties, he was permitted to visit once more the favourite scenes of his mortal feats, his manly sports, and exercises whilst on earth. But forgetting a certain prescribed precaution on his return to the isle of his birth, he lost the health and vigour he had enjoyed in the land of youth, and was suddenly metamorphosed into an old man, worn down by the infirmities of two hundred years. So saith the legend, which further adds that this happened to be the period of St. Patrick's mission in Ireland, and meeting with Ossian in his sacred journeys, the saint, actuated by feelings of compassion for the great age and infirmities of the hero, took him under his protection, with the determination of converting him; but he found him an obstinate Pagan. Ossian, according to the traditions, could not relish the fasting fare and rigorous austerity of the saint and his followers, and disliked very much to be disturbed early in the morning by the noise of bells and the chanting of matins, always preferring to the harmony of their sweetest psalms, the melody of the birds in some romantic valley, or the wild and discordant music of hounds, deer, and horns, to which he had been so long accustomed. His lamentations for his departed heroes and for his own forlorn state, left on earth behind them, are very affecting as given in the Irish MSS. or preserved orally amongst the people; and the panegyrics, ascribed to him, on their generosity, their valour and other virtues, whoever may have written them, are beautiful in the extreme as poetical compositions. After many long disputations, Ossian renounced Paganism; but for a long

* Ossian's removal to *Tir-na-n-og*—his long sojourn there, and subsequent return to earth, must have been the tale which Kohl, the German tourist, had heard from his "Kilrush driver," but like most of his legends he has so distorted the circumstances, from not sufficiently understanding what he heard, that it is not easy to recognise the tale (*vide* pp. 50, 51, of his work on Ireland).

time before his conversion St. Patrick found it necessary occasionally to draw him away from polemical discussions, when the violence of his temper appeared too likely to become roused; and this was ingeniously accomplished by asking him to narrate some of the heroic exploits of his father, himself, and brother Fenians, in the time of their glory. This stratagem at once calmed the storm of Ossian's anger, and his tales are the subject of the poems before alluded to, which are decidedly of very ancient composition. The allusions to Sliabh-na-m-ban and various places in its vicinity, with which the poems abound, are very numerous. Many of the members of the Society are, doubtless, familiar with the ancient manuscripts which contain them in the Libraries of the Royal Irish Academy, and Trinity College, Dublin, or at least with more modern transcripts, which are numerous enough, but it may be interesting to those who do not understand the Irish language that a short passage from one, with a translation, should be supplied here as an example:—

P. *Ḃ Oirín i r binn liom do zlóir,
'S beannaíct fōr le h-annuinn Fhínn;
Aitirir dam cá mhead fíad
Do éir le b ar Shliab na m-ban b-fionn?*

O. *Do rzaolleanaíu amac m'le cú,
Do b'feair lúit 'r do b' zairz;
Do éir dā fíad le zác coir d'job
Sul do cuimead iall na harz.*

*Do rzaollead amac cú beaz eile,
Ba leōir a tréine i r a cruinne;
Do éir le rín dā fíad
'S an oirlead leir an b-ílan uile.*

*Dā coir dēaz ar Shliab Luacra,
Dā coir mhōra a m-Beanna an rzailla,
Dā coir a n-iarair an Rōmaíu,
'S dā coir a n-adaínn Banna.*

*Dā coir a z-Cairzín na z-cloc,
'S dā coir a loc Inne Uí Chuirn,
Dā coir a b-Formaol na b-ílan
'S dā coir ar Shliab-na-m-ban-b-fionn.*

ST. PATRICK.

Melodious, Ossian, is thy voice to me,
And a blessing yet be to the soul of Fíonn;
To me now tell, how many stately deer
Fell in the chase of Sliabh-na-m-ban-fionn?

OSSIAN.

We from its cliffs a thousand hounds let loose—
Unmatched in speed were they, and fierce and strong ;
Two stalwart deer fell 'neath each dauntless hound,
Ere leashed in pack, by pliant leather thong.

And we let out another little hound—
All life was he, all perils to withstand,
Two noble deer fell victims to his fangs,
And many as the sporting Fenian band.

Twelve hounds did lurk on Sliabh Luachra's rushy breast,
And to Bearna an sgalla, two large ones ran—
Two watch'd the prey down westward of the Rower,
In measured springs two sought the silver Bann.

Two hounds took post, on rocky Carrigeen ;
Another pair at Inchiquin's clear lake ;
Two outstripp'd the dashing Fenian van ;
And two crouch'd down in Sliabh-na-m-ban's thick brake.

My attempt at a metrical translation is very rude indeed, but it is faithful. It is interesting to trace the localities alluded to in the above stanzas. The Bearna an sgalla* here mentioned is the famous Scallough Gap, a mountain pass on the confines of Carlow and Wexford. The Bann referred to is the river of that name in the County of Wexford, and not the Bann in Ulster. The name *Rōmari* I have translated Rower, as there can be no doubt the district of that name between Brandon Hill and Ross is referred to. There is a rocky eminence on one of the Sliabh-na-m-ban hills named *Carrigin-na-g-cloch*, which is evidently the 'rocky Carrigeen' mentioned. Sliabh Luachra is a mountain on the borders of the Counties of Limerick and Kerry, but there was also a hill of the name in the ancient Ossory, and it is strange to find such distant localities as this and the lake of Inchiquin coupled with places in Kilkenny, Tipperary and Wexford.

In the following stanza, from the same poem, one of our local rivers is also referred to :—

Da ḡadair deaḡ do bġ aḡ Fionn,
'Nuair do léiḡtġbe iad fá'ġ ġ-ḡleann ġa riġ ;
Ba bġnne a ġ-ḡlan ġa aoġbne ceoġl,
'Sa ġ-aḡair ó'ġ t-Suir amac.

Twelve dogs that Fionn had,
When let down the glen in full speed,
Sweeter their baying than the sweetest music,
And their face from the Suir out—

It need hardly be observed that the summit of Sliabh-na-m-ban commands a magnificent prospect of the valley of the Suir.

* We are indebted to Dr. O'Donovan for this reading : Mr. Dunne's MS. has *beairnair Sḡair*. Bearna an sgalla means "the gap of scalding"—so termed from the many conflicts which occurred there.—*Eds.*

In another part I find *Drom-Dearg*, the old Irish name of Killamery hill, alluded to thus:—

Ḃhian mhic Cúmhail ba mháire zhaol,
Eirdeacht le fíad Dhroma Dearg.

'Twas Mac Cumhail's delight, with cheerful brow
To listen to the deer of *Drom Derg*.

The same hill is also mentioned in the poem entitled "*Laoidh Aircion*:"—

Dearmad fleide do mhion Fíonn,
A n-Almhuin ne linn na laoi
Ar dír do'n b-Féinn o Dhrom Dearg,
Fad ar éirizid a b-feriz 'ra b-fíaoch.

Fíonn forgot inviting to a feast
In *Almhuinn*, in the days of the heroes,
Two of the Fians from *Drom Derg*,
For which arose their anger and their ire.

Before leaving the subject of Ossian's alleged sojourn with the patron saint of Ireland at the Rock of Cashel, long after all his compeers were consigned to the tomb, I shall relate a very curious legend, and one which though having particular reference to the locality under consideration, is a popular favourite throughout the greater portion of the south of Ireland.

The sports of the Fenians, particularly the exercises of the chase, were calculated to create a good appetite, which was satisfied every evening with the choicest venison around the *falacda Fian*, or cooking pits of the Fenians; and the gigantic Ossian, though worn down with age in the days of St. Patrick, yet enjoyed his former keen appetite. The traditions relate that men, animals, plants, and fruit, were of far larger proportions in the days of the Fenian heroes, than those which met Ossian's eyes on his return from *Tir-na-n-og*; and whenever a huge skeleton of the *Cervus Megaceros Hibernicus*, or great Irish fossil deer, turns up in one of our bogs, it is triumphantly referred to by the peasantry as a proof of their favourite theory, that all animals have been gradually degenerating in size from the beginning of the world. The following proverbial saying is one in general use:—

"Zac líne éiocfar a3 dul a mhne ra m-bréazai3e,
'S zac ríh a éiocfar a3 dul a b-flíche 'ra n-déanui3e."

Smaller each succeeding race, and more to falsehood prone—
And wetter each season, while later its fruits are grown.

Under these circumstances, it is not to be wondered at that the meal of an ordinary man should appear as a trifling repast in the eyes of the Fenian hero, and thus St. Patrick's kitchen had been daily the scene of loud and angry quarrels between Ossian and the saint's housekeeper, who, like many of her class, was rather pert and conceited, besides being of a niggardly disposition, never dispensing with a

բլաշեամլաճ (open, generous) hand, the alms for the beggar, or refreshments for the stranger, which had been entrusted to her in her master's absence. Her largest quantum for a ծծէալի ծալիք, or person's allowance, was no more than a lunch to the touch of the blind bard, whose thumb would in a moment measure the solid contents of the barley-cake laid before him, and discern the smallest increase or diminution in its size. One day, in particular, the scolding housekeeper declared, that what she had given on that occasion ought to be more than sufficient even for his enormous appetite, and that she would not give one morsel in addition; but her words were drowned in the wrathful voice of the enraged Fenian, as he indignantly retorted, “Եր որից ծո ծոհարսար ծալլեծց քեթնեալի ծո մօր լեծ՝ ծալիլի եօրնա, ա՛ր շաճեմա՞նա լոնծալի ծո մօր լեծ՝ շաճեմա՞նա շաճաճ, և՛ր շաճի շաճեճալի ծո մօր լեծ՝ որդճալի լիմե” (I often saw an ivy leaf as large as your barley-cake; and a quarter of a blackbird as large as your quarter of mutton; and a berry of the quickbeam, or mountain ash, as large as your *misgaun* of butter). Three words in reply from the housekeeper's virulent tongue were worse to Ossian's proud heart, than as many arrows from the quiver, viz.—“Շուշ լի լիճեաճ” (you lie). The motion of his hand was instantly understood by his faithful guide, a shrewd lad, who placed behind him his old oak chair, and Ossian, shocked at this crowning insult, sank back into it without uttering a word.* The boy selected by St. Patrick to be the guide and attendant of the blind hero is, in the traditions of the people, often compared to the young Յօբան Տաօր, or Goban the Builder, for his penetration and ready wit. He was devotedly attached to Ossian, and listened with ecstasy to the tales of Fenian prowess recounted by him.

Vain were the boy's urgent entreaties on this occasion that Ossian would eat; the old man's feelings were wounded, and his thoughts seemed to be absorbed in some stretch of recollection, or in the meditation of some project. After the lapse of many minutes, however, his cogitations were brought to an end, and he devoured the repast, with an appetite that seemed to have been whetted by a consciousness of success in some contemplated scheme. Henceforth he received his meals

* The strictest adherence to truth was one of the great qualities of the Fenians, and to this day a liar is held in the strongest contempt amongst the peasantry. In the “Poem of the Chase,” Ossian is represented as being highly indignant with St. Patrick for implying that he might possibly be induced to colour his narrative with fiction. The hero had asked the saint whether he ever heard the particulars of this chase; St. Patrick replied, “I have not heard, son of the king, wise Ossian of the strong deeds; tell us, and utter no lie, what happened to Fionn the day of the chase?” Ossian's indignant reply was:—

“Ո՛ր շաճեմաճօր-դե աղ քիաղի շօ,
Երեւշ լեծ որոյ քալլալն լիալի;
Լե քիոյնդ և՛ր լե դարս ալ լալի,
Ծո լիցիլի քալ զ շաճ շիւսծ.”

We, the Fians, would tell no lie,
Falsehood's cup is sour;
Truth and strength e'er brought us safe,
In peril's darkest hour.

without a murmur, to the astonishment of the shrewish housekeeper. He, however, bore her affront in recollection, and had planned his revenge.* Ossian had a favourite bitch in young of the first litter; he told the boy to watch her closely, and the moment she should have pups, to acquaint him of it. Many days had not elapsed ere the boy had it in his power to communicate the intelligence of this event, whereupon Ossian told him to procure a horse's hide fresh from the knife—or a sheep's skin, as another version of the legend has it—to nail it up, with the fleshy side out, to a board on the wall, and then facing the puppies towards it, to throw them against the hide, one after another, and tell him of the result. This being done, after some minutes a hearty laugh from the boy attracted the attention of Ossian, who inquired the cause. "The puppies have all tumbled back down again on the ground," responded the boy, "except one, who sticks firmly to the hide, with his teeth and nails." "Well," replied his master, "rear that one and drown all the rest." The boy complied with some reluctance, but, after a day or two, the chosen puppy possessed his undivided care and attention. At the end of thirteen months, during which time it was kept closely confined in a dark room, the dog was hardy enough for field sports, but strict care was taken all the time that he should not taste

* The Iverk version of this tradition, as supplied to us by Mr. Fogarty, omits all mention of the stingy housekeeper, and makes the entire dispute take place between the saint himself and his Fenian guest. Ossian thus made his complaint:—

"I r mpre Oirín aon mhac Fínn,
 A'zúr bím fa chúig a'z earraigh cloc
 Deirib fíab so b-*fa*zaim b'ad,
 A'ic b'io' a fíor a'z oia na *fa*zaim na beo'."

I am Ossian, only son of Fionn,
 And I am under a yoke, drawing stones;
 They say that I get food,
 But, God knows, I do not, nor drink.

St. Patrick overhearing this observation made, asked the Fenian did he not get enough to eat in a quarter of beef, a roll of butter, and a griddle of bread, for his daily allowance. Ossian replied that he often saw a quarter of a black-bird as large as the saint's quarter of beef, a berry of the mountain ash as large as his roll of butter, and an ivy leaf as large as his griddle of bread. St. Patrick became so enraged at hearing what he considered such a barefaced lie, that in his passion he cast into the fire all the poems and traditions which he had taken down at the Fenian bard's dictation, and all were consumed except a few which the servant contrived to snatch from the flames without being observed. Ossian then adopted the plan of convincing the saint of his truth-worthiness related by Mr. Dunne, except that, according to Mr. Fogarty, the hill to which they went to slay the bird was *S'hab cuac* (the cuckoo's mountain). When the great bird was slain and quartered, the enormous berry of the mountain ash was found in its stomach, and the ivy leaf was plucked from amongst those growing on a cromleac which was upon the hill where they had taken their stand, and the covering stone of which they removed to obtain the implements that they used on the occasion, as narrated by Mr. Dunne.—EDS.

blood of any kind nor see the day-light. Ossian seemed so well pleased with the animal that he called it *Bran Og*, or Young Bran, after Fionn's famous hound, Bran. One summer evening Ossian announced to his guide his intention of going a journey on the morrow. The boy was up at dawn and soon had made the necessary preparations for the journey; they were presently on the road, the Rock of Cashel was soon left far behind, and ere Sol had attained his meridian height the *cearica fhuairc*, or grouse hens, on Sliabh-na-m-ban were frightened from their heather nests by the dog which they had brought along with them to perform an important feat—that for which he had been so carefully reared and trained.

Arriving at the foot of the mountain, they turned eastward into the long winding valley of Gleann-a-smoil (pronounced Glanasmole), and having traversed it for some distance, Ossian asked his guide whether he saw anything remarkable. The boy replied that he only saw a huge tree bearing fruit, which, but for its enormous size, he would suppose to be a berry of the *crann caoréarinn* (the quickbeam, or mountain ash). "You are right in your supposition, nevertheless," said Ossian, "pluck one of those berries, and bring it safely away." Turning towards the rocky side of the glen, the boy's attention was attracted by the ivy growing on the cliff, the leaves of which were so extremely large, that their shadow overspread and darkened the valley. By the hero's directions one of these immense leaves was also taken, and they then retraced their steps towards the mountain of Sliabh-na-m-ban, which they immediately proceeded to ascend. Having reached the summit of *Suidhe Finn*, they sat on the cromleac to refresh themselves after their toilsome journey. When they had fully recovered breath, Ossian arose, and told his young guide to exert his strength, and lift off the covering stone of the cromleac. The boy was astonished at the command, but having essayed the task, was soon convinced of its impracticability, and declared that anything less than the strength of a giant must fail to raise so ponderous a block of stone. Ossian, himself, stooping placed his hands upon the fragment of rock, and lifting it with ease in his sinewy arms, exposed to view, in the cavity beneath, three of the instruments of war and the chase which had been used in the days of the Fenians—the *barra buabail*, or great sounding trumpet, the *lathróib* *bráir*, or brazen ball, used as a missile, and the *lan leadaicé* *lóméa*, or keen-edged polished sword,—which, at his direction, were taken out. The handling of these loved weapons once again deeply affected the aged warrior, who exclaimed—*Mo mhle rlan leir an la ionar cuiread anho ro rí* (my thousand farewells to the day on which ye were put here). Turning to the boy he said, "*A mhic mo éiríde zlan iad ro zo maic anoir*" (son of my heart, clean these well now). This being done, he told the lad to blow the trumpet, and the blast having been sounded, he asked whether anything strange was to be seen. The boy answered in the negative. "Blow it again, as loud as you can," said Ossian. "I have now blown it to my utmost

strength," replied his guide, "and yet I cannot see anything strange." Ossian took the trumpet himself, and placing it to his lips, the reverberations were heard from a thousand hills and vales all round : again he blew a blast still louder ; and once more a third more loud and far-echoing still. The result was marked by the boy with amazement. He observed a dense cloud overspread the horizon, and immediately the sky was darkened by a flight of birds gathering towards the mountain from the east, and lighting down in the valley beneath it. They came in three separate flights, each increasing in the size of the birds which composed it as the blast of the trumpet grew louder, the third flight consisting of enormous birds of the blackest plumage. The boy having broken into an exclamation that the valley was filled with the largest and blackest birds that the world ever saw, Ossian told him to unslip Young Bran, and let him down amongst them. This was done. "Now look sharp, my son," he said, "a moment of peril approaches ; life or death—not only to us, but to all the inhabitants of the earth beside—depends upon your aim and the strength of your arm. When the dog is returning from the encounter to which he now rushes, you must deprive him of life by hurling this brazen ball down his throat." The lad became alarmed at the manner of the old man, and tremblingly informed him that Young Bran was fiercely engaged with the birds in the valley, and slaughtering them in myriads. Having laid them all dead in every direction, the dog's fierce gaze encountered one huge blackbird, larger than all the rest, which had hitherto sat perched on a rock overhanging the valley, her shadow falling upon it like a cloud. The huge bird and the hound were soon engaged in a furious contest, and the boy having stated to Ossian what was now going forward, was informed that this bird was the object of their search. After a long and fearful battle, Young Bran slew the great bird, and drank its life-blood, but in its death struggle it infused a quantity of *virus* into the dog's mouth, from which the most venomous madness immediately ensued, and the ferocious animal rushed back towards its master. "O ! Ossian," exclaimed the boy with dismay, "the dog is now running back towards us with fire in his eyes, his open mouth exposing the bloody fangs, as if he would devour us, and I am afraid." "Courage, courage, now is the critical moment," rejoined Ossian, "the dog has tasted blood for the first time ; if you miss your aim, he'll destroy us, and thousands beside." The boy trembled, and in the hurried accents of terror said he was afraid to venture. "Coward," cried Ossian with phrenzied emphasis, "direct my hand towards his mouth"—the boy did so fortunately, and Ossian directly hurled the ball of brass into the animal's gaping mouth, when he rolled down the declivity writhing and foaming, and was soon choked. Ossian and the boy now proceeded to the vale of slaughtered blackbirds ; and after surveying them with wonder, the latter, as directed, took the largest, and with the *lanh leadaire* *ljoine* cut off one of its quarters, after which both returned to Cashel, and Ossian triumph-

antly laying down the proofs of his veracity on the kitchen table, called for St. Patrick, and summoning into his presence the housekeeper, narrated the whole affair, and concluded with emphasis—"Now have I told a lie?" Ossian was about to give the niggardly woman a palm-stroke across the ear (*buille baíre ar fead na cluairre amac*), but the saint interposed, and soothed the acerbity of the Fenian's temper by requiring the woman to beg his pardon, and by expressing his wonder at the adventures of the day, and his admiration of the rareties before him, which afforded such unequivocal evidence of the strictness of Ossian's veracity. By the saint's directions—so says the tradition—from that day forth Ossian was never stinted in his meals.

The foregoing legend represents Ossian as residing with St. Patrick at Cashel, and in confirmation of that circumstance, but that the matter would be irrelevant to the Sliabh-na-m-ban district, and would occupy too much space, I might here narrate two other curious legends, one having reference to Ossian's fight with an evil bull one night at Cashel, and the other, to a great day's thrashing performed by him at Clerihán, a place situate a short distance from "the Citie of the kings," the saint having been made a present of as much corn as one man would thrash in a day, the donor little calculating on the employment of a person of such prodigious strength as the Fenian hero. I may be permitted, however, to remark, that the very prevalent custom in this neighbourhood, and elsewhere too, for aught I know, of drowning the first litter of whelps in order to insure the destruction of the first one which has come into the world, is said to have originated from the circumstances connected with Ossian's dog, Young Bran, and the first litter of puppies, as treated of in the tradition. It is thought that the bite of the first pup, when grown up, would be venomous to either man or beast—that the animal would be always ferocious, and would eventually run mad.

Another piece of folk-lore may be mentioned in connexion with the mountain ash, for a berry of which tree we have seen that Ossian went to Gleann-a-smoil, a district which was long famous for that tree, known by the local peasantry as the *crann caorthainn*, which they pronounce *crann cawrhinn*. According to their traditions, this was a favourite tree with the ancient Druids, and with it are associated many popular superstitions. Withes were made of its branches on the May-eve, and tied around the cows' horns, and also temporary hoops of it put around the churns, on the same eve, as a preventive against the spells of witches, who are generally supposed to be very busily employed before sun-rise on May morning, in taking away the summer produce of honest people's butter. This is alleged to have happened to a farmer near me, and still living, who, with his family, used to work at the churn-dash from morning till night, and from night till morning, but was obliged, notwithstanding, to give it up in despair; not a print of sweet butter could be had from May to All-hallow-eve, the fruit of all their labour during

that period being only a churn full of froth and foam. But the next May-eve, the farmer, recollecting the old proverb—

“Ceangal do meadar le gad maic caoréarín,
 Ir ná léis do cúis teine le duine ear tairneac—”

Bind round your churn with a good gad of mountain ash,
 And let not your fire with a person across the threshold—

tied his *maddher*,* or churn, with a gad of the tree, and not only bound the churn, but every cow in his yard had her brows bedecked with a branch of the same, each having on it a good sprinkling of green leaves and red berries. The churn and cows' heads being thus secured, he himself watched the fire on the following morning, being concealed in a corner of the kitchen, where he lay not very long till an old crone entered for a spark. He sprang out from his hiding place and handled a *buailean*, or flail-stick, so threateningly, that she took to her heels, and he alleges that from thenceforth his dairy was as well supplied as ever!

However, to return to the Fenian traditions of Sliabh-na-m-ban. A notice of the legendary lore of the district would be far from complete, did it not contain more than a mere passing reference to the most famous of the Fenian deer-hunts—that of Gleann-a-smoil,—though as it is contained amongst the written metrical romances of the country, being one of the dialogues of Ossian and St. Patrick, and has been more than once translated into English verse, it must be well known to most of the members of the Society; I shall therefore but briefly state its leading incidents. Ossian having been requested by St. Patrick to recount some of the adventures of the king of the Fenians, proceeds to state that early one foggy morning Fionn and a large number of his most distinguished followers went to hunt in Gleann-a-smoil. They soon roused a hornless hind peculiarly marked, as one side was jet black, whilst the other was as white as snow. Fionn slipped his dogs Sgeolan and Bran, and twelve other hounds were also let loose upon her by his companions, and soon all were lost to sight, the Fenians pursuing all day till evening fell, without coming up with the chase. At length they found Bran lying in a state of exhaustion on the ground, and whilst lamenting the loss of the other dogs, a beautiful female appeared, and invited them to come and partake of refreshment at the palace of the Grecian emperor's daughter, who, having arrived from Greece with a thousand ships, presented by her father, had been sojourning for three months in Erin, without Fionn's knowledge, at *Oilean-na-h-Innre* (the Island of the Inch). The weary Fenians accepted the invitation, and having proceeded to the island were entertained at a sumptuous repast; having despatched which, Fionn proposed

* *Meadar*, a churn. “The Irish *meadar* is square and hollowed with a chissel, the Scottish is round and hooped.”—*O'Reilly's Irish Dictionary*. In my neighbourhood a churn is called *cúinneóis*; but I am informed the old Irish word, *maddher*, is still used in the more southern counties, and even in parts of the County of Kilkenny.

to lie down to sleep ; when immediately a singularly ugly woman, of gigantic proportions, and wearing a satin robe, of which one side was white and the other black, appeared before him, and stating herself to be the daughter of the emperor of Greece, offered her hand to the hero in marriage. Fionn declined, and stated that she must be an enchantress, as he knew by her dress that she it was who in the shape of a hornless hind they had been all that day pursuing. He demanded what she had done with his gallant dogs. The "loathly ladie" replied that she had put the dogs to death, and would proceed to cut off all the Fenians' heads if their chief any longer refused to comply with her proposition. She then recited an incantation which had the effect of instantly depriving the Fenians of their strength, and in this state she ordered her numerous female attendants to bind them hand and foot, and then proceeded to cut off the heads of a hundred of them, only leaving Fionn, Conan, Osgar, Diarmuid, and Ossian alive. Fionn was dismayed at the power of the enchantress, but pleaded that he could not possibly marry her, having already espoused the daughter of blind Goll, whose anger would be destructive to them all if a slight was put upon him by the repudiation of his child. Upon hearing this, the enchantress, leaving the Fenians bound at the island, proceeded with her train to attack Goll and his men, in order to teach them submission to her will. She encountered these champions and slew thousands of them, but engaging with Goll himself they fought in single combat for three successive days. In the mean time, Diarmuid, by means of his famous "beauty spot," contrived to insinuate himself into the affections of a lovely damsel of the enchantress' train, left at the island to guard the prisoners ; and she, at his request, broke the spells and set the Fenians free. The first use which Conan made of his freedom was to cut off the head of the fair maiden who had released them, which so much incensed Diarmuid that he would have slain him but for the interposition of Osgar, who reminded them that they had a common enemy to encounter in the enchantress. They then proceeded to where the battle was at its height between Goll and the Grecian princess, and Osgar, having relieved Goll, soon dispatched his antagonist by thrusting his spear through her heart.

This tale, even setting aside the enchantments of the Grecian princess, will not bear criticism, as it would be quite impossible that the *dramatis personæ* could ever have been brought together—that is, if we are to place reliance on the other Fenian traditions which put Diarmuid to death before Oscar, the son of Ossian, could have been born, or that Fionn could have taken the daughter of Goll as his second wife. However, the poet's licence to arrange his romance according to his own fancy must not be too nicely questioned. Metrical translations of the poem which recounts the chase of Gleann-a-smoil, have been supplied by Miss Brooke, and in the "Irish Penny Journal," but in these the names of the places which give locality to the story have been omitted. I have given the foregoing outline of the tale from a very full and

tolerably ancient copy of the original Irish poem in the possession of Mr. Pierce Hawe, of Coolhill, barony of Kells, and I find Ossian made to say, where the Fenians accept the invitation to the Island of Inch—"we followed her in haste to *O'leann-na-h-Jhne*, till we reached *Slabh-na-m-ban*." I note this circumstance, as with many persons the name of Gleann-a-smoil will not be considered sufficient to identify the exact locality of the chase in question.

The scenes of a great many of our Fenian tales may be ascertained by the Irish names of hills and other places which stand as imperishable landmarks to point them out. Different localities may often bear the same name, thereby tending to confuse the antiquarian investigator, but there is scarcely any valley respecting whose site there is such a diversity of opinion among our *seannchaidhes* as Gleann-a-smoil. In this portion of the South of Ireland the valley to which that name is declared to have anciently belonged, and by which it is still frequently designated amongst the Irish-speaking peasantry, is the glen, of considerable extent, commencing in Tipperary, under Sliabh-na-m-ban, running eastward at the foot of the Newtown hills, and thence taking a southerly direction along that portion of the County of Kilkenny modernly known as "the Slate Quarries," where it is washed by the river Lingawn, and extends to the vicinity of the river Suir, near Carrick. However, more southward still, the honour of containing this famous valley is claimed for the County of Cork; whilst I find the title of the County of Dublin to its possession more generally admitted.

Dr. Petrie, in an article on the Old Bridge of Miltown, which he contributed to the thirty-sixth number of the "Irish Penny Journal," designates the valley in which the river Dodder has its source, "Glanasmole, or the Valley of the Thrush," and remarks of it, that there are objects of great interest to the antiquary and naturalist to be seen there; amongst them "the three things for which, according to some of these old bardic poems, the glen was anciently remarkable, and which were peculiar to it: these were the large breed of thrushes from which the valley derived its name, the great size of the ivy leaves found on its rocks, and the large berries of the rowan or mountain ash, which formerly adorned its sides." Reference is here evidently made to the Ossianic legend which I have already narrated, and it is attempted to substitute a thrush for our blackbird—an innovation which the Kilkenny and Tipperary *seannchaidhes* would never be reconciled to or induced to tolerate; and I think they would be fully justified in this, for neither Gleann-a-smoil, which is the true name of the valley, nor Glanasmole, as Dr. Petrie writes it, could signify "the valley of the thrush." *Smolach*, a word of two syllables, is the Irish for "thrush;" it is the same both masculine and feminine; in the plural it is *smolcha*, but in any of the cases, either singular or plural, it is not *smoil*. The latter word has its own peculiar meanings, none of which, however, refer to a bird of any description, but, on the contrary, to inanimate things. A Kilkenny man will never consent to have *smol* taken to signify a thrush, till it can be

shown that *spar* would stand for sparrow, or *swal* for swallow.* In one respect the Dublin men have an apparent advantage over us of Kilkenny and Tipperary, for they have a seaboard within a few miles of their glen, and it may be fairly alleged against us, that there being no sea near Sliabh-na-m-ban, there could be no island, nor could the Grecian princess have there with her a thousand ships. This, however, is easily answered. As the lady dealt in enchantment, all these matters may be ascribed to the spells which she used ; and many places are termed islands, in Ireland, which are situate on the banks of streams, though not surrounded with water. Upon making inquiry on the spot a short time since as to where the peasantry of the district considered the enchantress had raised her palace, a man named Kelly, residing at Rossenany, pointed to a place on the banks of the river Lingawn, which runs through the valley that is stated to have been the ancient Gleann-a-smoil. The present name of the place so pointed out is Oilean-inse-coitionn, or, for shortness, Inse-coitionn. However, be this as it may, whether Kilkenny has a just claim to the valley of Gleann-a-smoil or not, that claim has been asserted from a very ancient period, as the old songs and proverbs of the district abundantly testify. The following is a well known local proverb concerning the exclusive privileges conferred by nature on the valley, and the allusion to the river Lingawn which it contains clearly shows the place to which it is referable :—

“ Դա Բաճա աչ Զլեան-ան-րմօլ, Դա՛ Ե-բլլ աչ աօղ Զլեան Ելե
 և Կ-Ելլոյ և Բորձա՛ծ օ՛ղ Կ-ձաօլ՛ և Կ-Եաբ, օ՛ղ Կ-ձաօլ՛ և Ե-Եալձ,
 օ՛ղ Կ-ձաօլ՛ և Կ-Ելլ, աչ Եր օ՛ղ Կ-ձաօլ՛ և Կ-օլլ. Աղ Զրլան ար Եալծոյ,
 և Զրլան և Եաճօղ Լաւ, աչ Եալճեան Դա Զրլոյ ար Բաճ և
 Եալճօղ. Աղ Երաւ Դա Երաճ և Զ-Եոմալճե և Կո Դա Լոյնճե
 աչ Կո Բլաճ Երաճ, Զ Եոճա, Ելոճճալլ, ար Երաճալ ԶԼա,
 Երաճաճ և Կ-Եալոյ.”

Gleann-a-smoil hath privileges that no other valley in Erin has—shelter from the south wind, from the north wind, from the west wind, and from the east wind—from the sun in the morning, the sun at noon-day, and the mild refulgence of his rays during the evening ; the trout and salmon always in the Lingawn, and the stately deer, all life and celerity, on its green arbo-
 rous banks.

Again, one of the prophecies attributed to St. Columbkil, in the mouth of almost every peasant in this district, and looked forward to as likely to be speedily fulfilled, clearly refers to this locality. Ireland

* Dr. O'Donovan informs us, that, according to ancient Irish manuscripts which he has consulted, the scene of Fionn's hunt was in Cualann, which was a district comprising portions of the present Counties of Wicklow and Dublin ; but of course transcribers varied the names of the places mentioned in these poems to suit local feelings and prejudices. Dr. O'Donovan says—“ According to the traditions in Meath and in the glens of the County of Dublin, where the people still speak Irish, Gleann-a-smoil means ‘the valley of the thrush.’ We of the south add another syllable to *smol* to express thrush (րմօլաճ) ; but the Meath men will have their own form (անրմօլ, gen. անրմօլի) and interpretation to be correct ; they insist that the Gleann-a-smoil of the Fenian story, is the place still so called in the County of Dublin, and they hold us in

is to be taken from British rule by a dreadful battle, in which a "six-fingered, red-haired man of Leinster" is to act a prominent part, the native Irish receiving aid from a foreign nation; the prophecy then goes on to say:—

"Beid r3noba7nac* coille a7i cnoc-na-carraige, no6 do beid na a7t ceazmhala a73 fearaib fe6 conntae. Tu7e7e7 buacail-73e breaz7a Sleib-Dile a7 A6-a-t-fearra. Beid f7ac du6 a7i Druim-fear-b6, a7 cor7 a 7ota a b-fu7l 6aonna, le7u77uor7ar Cill Chai7u77 7o cala7i, 7on7o67a73 a7 co7a 7a 6e77ead a 7-c7on7 Beanna na 7ao7e, beid cam7a a73 A6-7u77e cor7on7 a7 caob na 7o7na7e, 77 7a7l 7ua7 d'fearaib d'7 t-77u7 7o d7 '7 t-77ab6."

There will be a wood on Cnock-na-carraige,† and this will be the rendezvous of the men of six counties. The fine youths of Sliabh Dile‡ will fall at Ath-a-t-searra.§ A raven perched on Drom-seann-bho|| will slake her thirst in human blood. Kilkenny will be laid in ruins. The stream of battle in this quarter, will finally run in the direction of Windgap; there will be a camp at Ath-inse-coitionn, on the river Lingawn, and a cold pavement of [dead bodies of] men from the Suir to the mountain.

The "Ath-inse-coitionn" here referred to, is the same place as that which I have before alluded to, as pointed out to me for the Island of

great contempt for attempting to transfer this glen to the south." In the Dublin glen they still point out a well called Tobar Oisin.—EDS.

* I give this word "r3noba7nac" as the local *seannchaidhes* pronounce it, but I do not find it in the Irish dictionaries. I am, however, of opinion that r3noba7nac coille means brushwood, or the straggling remains of a felled wood.

† Cnoc-na-carraige, i.e., the hill of the rock, situate near Ballykeeffe.—[This remarkable hill, which overlooks the flat district of Ballycallan, was quite bare of timber till within the last forty years; the proprietor then took it into his head to plant it, and a large wood now covers its face. The people of the district look on this as a first instalment towards the fulfilment of St. Columbkil's vaticination, and expect that the rest of the promises will be shortly accomplished. Part of the prophecy is that the blood of the slain will pour in a torrent through the flat ground at Ballycallan, and turn the wheel of a mill there.—EDS.]

‡ Sliabh Dile is the name locally applied to a considerable district bordering on Sliabh-na-m-ban. The name is found in ancient manuscripts, and Dr. O'Donovan informs us that there is every reason to suppose that it was originally applied to the mountain itself, before the latter received a new appellation from the "women of Feimheann." The Doctor remarks—

"You will find that ancient names are sometimes transferred, as well as forgotten. As, for example, Sliabh Cua, which was the name of a high mountain, is now transferred to the lands at the base, while the mountain itself goes by a different and wrong name, i.e., Knockmuldoon (*Anglicè*, Muldowney's hill). When the old authorities are examined, I have no doubt that the following names will be identified as I now conjecture, or rather infer from positive data, viz.—Crotta Cliach, now the Galtees; Sliabh Dile, now Slievenaman; Sliabh Eibhlinne, now Slieve Phelim; Sliabh Cua, now Knockmuldoon; Sliabh Alduin, now Devil's Bit; Sliabh Comhalt, now Keeper Hill. I take a deep interest in this subject, and I trust, if we ever come to publish the ancient Irish work called *Dinnseanchus*, we shall be able to recover all the ancient names of our great mountains, which now go under such undignified appellations as Tory Hill, Bessy Bell, Mary Gray, Katty Gallagher, Sugar Loaf, &c."

Inch, in the poem of the chase.—*Ath* and *oileann* were, I am informed, indifferently applied formerly, but both are now generally omitted for

Mr. Dunne informs us that—"The name *Sliabh Dile* (pronounced *Slie Dheela*) is at present understood to apply to a large district extending a considerable distance southwards from Kilamery hill, and embracing the Windgap hills and vallies, and those to the left of the high road from Kilkenny to Clonmel, stretching towards Glenbower. The boundaries of the district, however, are not well defined; speaking of an inhabitant of the locality the people would not say that he lived in *Sliabh Dile*, but would name the particular townland in which his house was situate; but they always use the general denomination in speaking comparatively, as, 'he is the strongest man in *Sliabh Dile*,' 'she is the handsomest girl in *Sliabh Dile*,' &c. In like manner, the name of *Gleann-a-smoil* is given generally to an extensive valley whose limits are undefined, and the term is seldom applied except in recounting the old romances, songs, or proverbs. I recollect that a widow in *keening* her husband, who died some years ago at Breamor, in the parish of Grangemockler, and near *Sliabh-na-m-ban*, concluded one of her extempore Irish stanzas in these words:—

'Ír fás tú mé go h-uaigneac ár éadob Sliab Dile.'

And lonely you have left me, at the side of *Sliabh Dile*."

There can be little doubt, we think, that the opinion of Dr. O'Donovan is well founded as to *Sliabh Dile* being the original name of *Sliabh-na-m-ban*, though now it is transferred, like the instance of *Sliabh Cua*, to the district at its base. The following charter, the original of which is in the Record Room, Kilkenny Castle, gives some data whereby to determine the extent of *Sliabh Dile* in the sixteenth century:—*Sciant, &c., quod ego Ricardus Butler filius et heres Willielmi filii Johannis Butler de Polleghore dedi &c. nobili viro Domino Petro le Butler comiti Ormonie et Margarete ejus comitisse omnia messuagia, terras, tenementa, &c., que habeo in Coraghmore et Cahernane apud Sleywe Dile in comitatu Kilkennie; et omnia messuagia, &c., que habeo in Ahenne et Kilelispin apud Sleywe Dyle predictum in comitatu Tipperarie; nec non totum illud jus et titulum que habeo in Garridufe apud Sleywe Dyle in comitatu Tipperarie predictum, &c. D. &c., anno regni regis Henrici octavi xvio.—Eds.*

§ *Ath-a-t-searra* means "the ford of the filly." This place divides the Counties of Tipperary and Kilkenny, a mile nearer to Callan than Garryricken gate. Tradition states that a wolf once came to this spot, and attempted to steal a young filly, whereupon the mare, which had fetters on her fore-feet, suddenly sprang up and brought the fetter directly on the wolf's neck, keeping the animal pressed down in that position, until it was either strangled or beaten to death by the farmers with pitchforks and bill-hooks. Perhaps this is the situation of the *Gleann-searraigh*, or glen of the foal, mentioned in a note, p. 14, of "*leabart-na-5-Ceart*" (the Book of Rights). One of the five prerogatives of the king of Leinster, was the deer of *Gleann-searraigh*, to be brought to his palace at *Din-Riogh*. Tradition states that this neighbourhood formerly abounded in red deer, and many skeletons of those animals are still found in the neighbouring bogs.

|| *Drom-seann-bho*, situate on the high road between Callan and Kilkenny. This means, "back of the old cow." I have often been told that a neighbouring nobleman (the late Earl of Desart) blasted this rock, thereby reducing it to a level nearly with the road; and after the operation, he jokingly remarked to a *seannchuidhe*, who stood hard by, and whose favourite theme was prophecy—"Now can the raven drink of human blood from the top of *Drom-seann-bho*?" Whereupon the *seannchuidhe* at once replied—"Until now, my lord, I had thought it impossible; but no longer does the shadow of a doubt remain on my mind as regards the prophecy; your lordship has now made

the sake of conciseness, leaving the name as *Inse-coitíonn*. That the prophecy which has been here quoted has been long current in this neighbourhood,* may be inferred from a stanza of an old Irish *caoine*, or dirge, handed down as having been chanted by a woman from the banks of the Lingawn, for some of her kindred or neighbours who fell in one of the skirmishes following the last civil war of Ireland. The following is the stanza in question :—

“*‘Mhó éireac éada! ‘r m’atuirre nímheac—*

Ní h-é coḡad Ćromuīl ir dīc līom.

Nā coḡad Rīḡ Uīlliam, ī n-aī mārbaīd nā mīlce

‘Ācc a n-doircearī d’fīl eīdīrī Ćallānīrī īr Beairīa-nā-ḡaoīte.

‘S a n-ḡleann-aī-rmōīl, do cūīrcearī cīīc aīrī.”

Ah! my long weary woe, from war and its train—

Yet it's not that of Cromwell, which gives me most pain;

Nor the war of king William, in which thousands were slain—

But oh! the red torrents that reeking will flow,

'Twixt Callan and Windgap, that fill me with woe!

Oh! Gleann-a-smoil, last stage of the scene,

No spring can restore, thy carpet of green!

I might quote many other local songs and proverbs which would bear on this subject, but I fear that I have already grown tedious, and shall therefore draw to a conclusion.

Sliabh-na-m-ban holds a prominent position in all the traditionary remains of the South of Ireland, whether recounted in poetry or prose, handed down orally or in manuscript. I have already mentioned that there are frequent references to it by name in the curious old poems known as the “Dialogues of Patrick and Ossian,” but there

Drom-seann-bho low enough for the raven, whilst standing upon it, to dip his bill in human blood—all will come to pass in due time!” It is said to have been a detached fragment of rock, about five feet in height, of a different kind of stone from that of the locality. It was very remarkable from having in the centre of its smooth face an indentation resembling the impression of a giant hand on the soft surface of stucco. It is traditionally said to have been cast by the hero Fionn, from the top of Sliabh-na-m-ban, and the indentation was looked upon as the impression made by his hand as he balanced it for the throw. As it lay by the road side it may have been considered an impediment to the traffic, or the object in removing it was, perhaps, to falsify the prophecy concerning which the peasantry were so credulous.

* It is a curious fact that the local *seannchaidhes* throughout Ireland have all different versions of this prophecy, the names of places being changed in each to suit their own district. It, or a similar prophecy, was famous in every part of the kingdom in the middle of the seventeenth century, as appears from the Deposition of Richard Bourke, B.D., of Enniskillen, sworn A.D. 1643, preserved in the MS. Library, Trin. Coll. Dub. (E. 3. 6.), and printed in full by Dr. O'Donovan, in his edition of the *Annals of the Four Masters*, vol. v. p. 1797, *note*. The version given in this Deposition refers to Dun-na-skea, Athcru, and Singland near Limerick, as the future scenes of bloody battles; it is then added—“And that there is a prophecy amongst them [the Irish rebels] of the destruction of Kilkenny, to this effect, that O'Callaghan's horse-boy (taking the bridle off his horse in the Cathedral place of Kilkenny) shall there ask, where was the church of Kilkenny?”—*Ends*.

is more frequent mention still amongst them of a *Cnoc-na-b-Fíann*, or "hill of the Fenians," which all our southern readers and speakers of the Irish language believe to mean *Sliabh-na-m-ban*. The names of several of the Fenian heroes are also found connected with different places in this locality. Fíonn himself has given title to the highest hill of the range, from him called *Suidhe Fínn* (Fíonn's seat), whilst the cromleac on its top is termed *Bord-suidhe-Fínn* (the table of Fíonn's resting-place). The eminence pointed out as the scene of the celebrated lady-race, which is of lesser altitude, is situate within the old barony of Compsey, now included within Slieveardagh. One of the valleys in the *Sliabh-na-m-ban* range is known as *Glenn Goll* (the vale of Goll), blind Goll, Fíonn's father-in-law, being traditionally said to have once, whilst engaged in the chase, leaped across it, from the eminence at one side, to that at the other; whilst in the same neighbourhood till lately was pointed out a small cromleac-shaped monument, the site of which is still called *Leaba Bran* (the bed or grave of Bran), from Fíonn's favourite hound, said to have been interred there.* The account which the peasantry give of the destruction of this interesting monument is, that the stones were torn from their position and scattered about by a tithe-proctor and his bailiffs, in revenge for some resistance or affront offered them by the neighbouring people. Of Diarmuid O'Duibhne, amongst other traditionary recollections of the district, it is affirmed, that once in hunting a deer through Compsey, he lost a white steed by its being precipitated into a pool near the bog of Poulacapple, which name is alleged to be derived from this particular incident, as it literally signifies horse-pool. Numerous skeletons of gigantic deer have been found in this bog, and whenever they turn up they are always confidently appealed to by the peasantry as conveying the most convincing proof of the truth of the legend which accounts for the name of the locality.

I ought not to omit mentioning also, before quitting the subject, that in a wild, ferny, and unfrequented spot among the *Sliabh-na-m-ban* hills, there is a rock called *Carraig an t-rua* (the rock of the spinning-wheel), and the peasantry declare that on approaching near

* The Iverk peasantry have the following quatrain descriptive of the appearance of Bran:—

"Corá doim do bí a3 bhíann,
Dá fúil dub a3ur cáin zéal;
Dá clúair cóirca beaí3,
A3ur beal buí3e."

Dark brown legs had Bran,
Two black eyes, and a white back;
Two red erect ears,
And a yellow muzzle.

This differs materially from the stanza given in the *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Dublin*, p. 215, describing the marks of Fíonn Mac Cumhail's greyhound. It is as follows, but no authority is cited:—

"Corá buí3e bí aín bhíann,
A dá caeb dub 'ra cáin zel;
Druim ruatáide óf cenn reí3,
Ir dá clúair cóirca cóm-beaí3."

Yellow legs had Bran,
Both her sides black and her belly white;
A speckled back over her loins,
And two crimson ears, very red.

A place alleged to be the site of the grave of Bran is also pointed out by the County of Dublin peasantry, in the valley of the Dodder.—Eds.

the place they often hear a humming noise, as of a spinning-wheel, proceeding, they believe, from a fairy chamber beneath the rock. Doubtless, this must be the abode of the mysterious females whose unwelcome visit to the house at Gortnapise forms one of the legends of the locality which I have related.*

FOLK-LORE.

No. II.

ON THE TRADITIONS OF THE COUNTY OF KILKENNY.

[COMMUNICATED BY JOHN O'DONOVAN, ESQ., LL.D., M.R.I.A.]

Having seen a proof-sheet of the legend about the witches of Sliabh-na-m-ban, I was gratified at finding so much of the legendary lore of our County preserved, even though I believe it to be very much modified.

One of the best modern poems in the Irish language, composed in the year 1764 by the Rev. James Lawler, P.P. of Oning and Templeorum, in Iverk, relates in a particular manner to the witches of Sliabh-na-m-ban, and I am most anxious that your Society should preserve it. If you will do so, I shall be most happy, at some future period, to furnish you with a copy of the original and a faithful translation, as the author was related to my family, and as it was from his books and handwriting that I first learned to read the native language.

There are many other legends connected with our native County besides those given by Mr. Dunne, which, in my opinion, are valuable for the purpose of comparison with our ancient legendary stories. Of these I am anxious to lay before you a few specimens, that you may be able to judge how far they are worth preserving.

On the townland in which I was born, situate in the parish of Kilcolumb, barony of Ida, and County of Kilkenny, there is an elevation called Con-bhuidhe, in connexion with which, and to account for its name, the following legend is told, which is so like some of

* Dr. O'Donovan conceives the version of the legend of the witches of Sliabh-na-m-ban, given in the preceding pages, to be very much modernised: the spinning-wheel not being more than eight generations in use. A Kilkenny bard celebrates the superiority of the spinning-wheel over the distaff, in a poem beginning "Coiseal éar n' i n'íofaí fearfa ó éarínis a b-éaríonh túfáinn" (the twirling distaff will spin no longer since the spinning-wheel has come into vogue). With regard to the same legend, it is further said by the peasantry, that a party who attempted to make their way to *Tir-na-n-og* through a cave in Sliabh-na-m-ban, were met by the witches, who cried out, "Roileán na fóla asur cniácar na b-pucos" (the riddle of blood, and the sieve of the puddings), whereat the adventurers, petrified with fear, instantly returned.—EDS.